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ABSTRACT

Guidelines for environmental organizations who wish to establish student internships or use interns more effectively are presented, based on 1983-1984 interviews and surveys of environmental group representatives. While the focus is on internships for undergraduate and graduate students, environmental interns may be recent college graduates, high school students, or career changers. The internship is short-term (1 month to 1 year), part- or full-time, and is often part of a student's educational program. Interns can help environmental groups with: research, fund raising, newsletters, lobbying, public awareness and educational programs, membership development, and coordination of volunteers. Information is provided on: why students want internships with environmental groups, reasons schools support internships, identifying good intern projects, defining tasks before recruiting interns, locating and selecting qualified students, making arrangements such as learning agreements, considerations regarding compensation for interns, federal college work-study programs, award of academic credit, orientation, supervision, evaluation, establishing ongoing relationships with the schools and key individuals to contact, and assistance provided by the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education. (SW)

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A Guide to Environmental Internships:

How Environmental Organizations Can Utilize Internships Effectively

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National Society for Internships and Experiential Education

The National Society for Internships and Experiential Education

With its national headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina, NSIEE is an association of individuals, educational institutions, and community and government leaders that support the concept of learning through experience as an integral part of quality education. NSIEE members work with programs for internships, community and public service, field and practicum experiences, cooperative education, field research, career development, cross-cultural learning, outdoor education, and others related to hands-on ("experiential") learning. NSIEE publishes a newsletter, sponsors conferences and workshops, provides information and technical assistance services, publishes directories of internship opportunities, and offers a computerized talent bank of professionals experienced in designing and managing programs for internships and other forms of experiential learning. We are a group of people who share a belief about how to enhance education. Contact NSIEE in Raleigh for more information:

National Society for Internships
and Experiential Education
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A Guide to Environmental Internships:

How Environmental Organizations Can Utilize Internships Effectively

by Jane C. Kendall

National Society for Internships
and Experiential Education

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The image on the cover of this booklet is the logo of the Wildlife & Nature Study Center at Brevard Community College in Melbourne, Florida.

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Introduction

Environmental organizations can stretch staff dollars and get more done by using student interns effectively. Many students are anxious to gain experience and complement their classroom learning by working in nonprofit organizations. With some training and very little money, you can multiply your staff help and provide a great learning experience for future environmentalists.

Internships can be part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid, for academic credit or volunteer without academic credit, and for graduate or undergraduate students in all majors. Interns are already helping environmental groups with:

- research
- fundraising
- newsletters
- lobbying
- public awareness programs
- educational programs
- membership development
- coordination of volunteers

This booklet is for staff and board members of environmental organizations interested in establishing internships or utilizing them more effectively. The advice comes from environmentalists who currently host student interns in their organizations. They offer these tips from their own experiences.

The National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE) gathered these comments in 1983 and 1984 through a series of interviews and surveys of environmental groups. This booklet is part of a larger NSIEE project to help the environmental organizations in the southeast to utilize internships more effectively as an ongoing resource for staff assistance.

Funding for this project is provided by the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. With its strong interest in the concerns of environmental groups, the Foundation sees internships as one important way to build their ongoing staff capacities. When the Foundation asked several consultants how it could best aid environmental groups over the long term, they recommended that the utilization of internships would be a significant factor in strengthening environmental organizations.

Acknowledgments

We thank the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation for the funding and support for us to do this booklet and to provide NSIEE's services to environmentalists in the southeast. We thank the Massachusetts Internship Office and the Atlantic Center for the Environment for their insights quoted here. I am grateful for the work of the NSIEE staff, volunteers, and members who helped with research, production, and ideas -- Annette Wofford, Ran Coble, Bob King, Jenny Anderson, and Lisa Blumenthal. And, most importantly, we join you in thanking the environmentalists who have offered to you their experiences and advice for building strong, effective internships.

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What Is an Environmental Internship?

- It is an opportunity for students to work, learn, and serve in a public or private organization concerned about the environment.
- It is short-term (one month to one year).
- It may be part-time or full-time.
- It is often part of a student's educational program.

Environmental interns may be from any educational level--graduate or undergraduate students, recent graduates, high school students, career changers. The focus of this booklet is on internships for undergraduate and graduate students, but the principles of good internships are common to all groups. Many internships are arranged through faculty members, and the students receive academic credit for the learning they demonstrate as a result of the internship.

Why Environmental Organizations Host Interns

" I can use interns year round on all types of projects. There are research and writing projects we simply could not do otherwise."
- Bob Kerr, The Georgia Conservancy, GA

"What can environmental groups get out of using interns? We get these benefits: staff extension during busy periods of the year, creative input into programs, a fresh outlook on a regular basis, a definite lift in staff morale, and the pleasure of professional and personal feedback."
- Richard James
Schuylkill Valley Nature Center, PA

"I make a long list every year of the projects we really need to do. Then I talk with friends and other contacts at area colleges and universities to see what students they have who can do as many of the projects as possible. It works."

- Bruce Nichols
  Soil Conservation Service, MD

"Internships assist [environmental] organizations by providing the opportunity to train future leaders, high quality research or other projects at low cost, and a means for communication between citizens' groups and academic expertise."

- Harold Wood, Friends of the Earth[1]

"We have been able to increase greatly the size of the groups visiting our facility; each intern adds 20 additional citizens to our service capabilities. Interns are an extra mind for ideas, an extra pair of hands for a multitude of activities. They can free up paid staff for other activities. They can handle so much more than we originally expected."

- Bill Beatty, Brooks Nature Center, WV

In a 1984 survey, environmental organizations that host interns regularly listed the following reasons that they continue to have internships:

INTERNS BENEFIT OUR ORGANIZATION BY . . .	
...providing needed staff assistance at low cost.	100%
...increasing our communications with the interns' colleges or universities and giving us better access to faculty expertise and research facilities there.	50%
...giving us a fresh perspective.	38%
...enhancing the interns' personal commitment to our environmental goals as a citizen and future professional.	38%
...giving us the opportunity to observe an individual's work firsthand before consideration as a regular employee.	16%
...offering staff a chance to contribute to the growth of future professionals in the environmental movement.	16%
...lifting staff morale.	3%
...providing objectivity in conducting public opinion surveys.	3%

Student interns can handle those special projects you want to do but just cannot find the time for. They can expand the service capacity of busy organizations, conduct research, and provide an extra set of eyes, ears, and hands for hearings, meetings, and other activities.

Why Do Students Want Internships with Environmental Organizations?

1. To gain experience.

2. To support environmental protection.

3. To test out their interests and skills in possible careers related to the environment--or to research, legislation, nonprofits, media, etc.

4. To do meaningful work and use their skills for a worthwhile purpose.

5. To extend and enhance what they have learned in class.

6. To make contacts and demonstrate their value professionally.

Chattanooga Nature Center at Reflection Riding

What's In It for the Educational Institution?

Most colleges, universities, and secondary schools actively seek internship opportunities for their students. Educational institutions support internships because such experiences--

- complement students' classroom learning
- support students' career development
- provide bridges to the community for service and research
- open channels for feedback on new course content
- motivate students to learn
- provide ties with alumni who supervise interns.

Experience-based learning is an essential component of a complete education. Environmentalists sometimes do not realize that many faculty and administrators are anxious to help their students find meaningful learning experiences, such as internships with environmental organizations.

". . . the association of interns and their agency sponsors provides a powerful and effective tool for those members of the environmental community who have limited budgets, good projects needing to be done, a desire to develop future environmental leaders, and an interest in bringing in new blood. For the effectiveness of these organizations, interns may not only be helpful, but essential."

- Marshall Murphy
  Atlantic Center for the Environment[2]

Developing Good Internships: What Is Important?

CLARIFYING YOUR NEEDS

Identifying Good Intern Projects
Defining the Tasks
What About Routine Work?

RECRUITING THE INTERNS

How Do You Find Qualified Students?
How Many Interns?
Selecting Good Interns

THE ARRANGEMENTS

Who Does What, When, and Why?
About Compensation
About Academic Credit

MAKING IT WORK

Orientation
Supervision
Duration of the Internship
Evaluation
Some Considerations

Clarifying Your Needs

Identifying Good Intern Projects

Begin with the goals of your organization. Outline your current needs. What are your work priorities in the next six months? The next year? What are your research needs? What "organizational" activities need attention--membership development, newsletter, bookkeeping, fundraising, media work? Student interns are handling these responsibilities successfully for environmental groups of all sizes.

What about citizen education? Research on academic departments at area colleges and universities that can provide future interns? Consider special projects for which you do not have the expertise on the staff--creating films, media shows, market studies, accounting systems, computerizing your membership, public school curricula, etc. Make a list of your primary project needs. The critical factor is that interns' work should be important to the goals and priorities of the organization. Otherwise, why invest your time or the intern's?

Some environmentalists have found that internships are most effective when interns work on specific projects that can be clearly defined and completed within the time of the internship:

"We choose projects that are of limited duration and which provide a definite end product at the close of the internship."
- Ken Bossong
Citizens' Energy Project, Washington, DC

"As we have worked with interns over the years, we have become better and better at specifying the interns' responsibilities and the qualifications needed to do the job well. Internships are most effective when the interns are assigned to a specific project and have specific tasks."

- Fred Annand, North Carolina Nature Conservancy, Chapel Hill, NC

"By giving the intern responsibility for an entire project, from planning to implementation and evaluation, the sense of purpose to deliver a product of high quality becomes very strong."

- Marshall Murphy
Atlantic Center for the Environment [3]

Defining the Tasks

Before you recruit interns, write down:

1. The purpose of the project(s)
2. The tasks to be accomplished and the important parameters that define the tasks as clearly as you possibly can
3. The completion date needed
4. The areas of knowledge it will take to handle the responsibilities successfully
5. The types of work skills and qualities it will take, such as the ability to write so that the general public can understand it, to get along with volunteers, to make accurate staff reports of committee meetings, to listen carefully to citizens' concerns, to communicate well by phone, to grasp the political implications of a project
6. The performance level needed in order for the intern's project or product to be of value to your organization.

"The organization must clearly define its needs and then pass that clear definition on to the intern, so the intern is not doing makeshift, spur-of-the-moment tasks.

- Rod Coggin
  Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Annapolis, MD

As you talk with prospective interns, also be sensitive to the student's learning goals. Environmental organizations often negotiate for special projects when a student has particular interests and skills to offer. It is still important for you to ensure that the project fits your goals and current needs.

"My interns do some of the same jobs as the staff people--presentations before groups, working with children of all ages--in order for the intern to get as much 'real work experience' as possible. I try to match the intern's background and area he or she is most interested in with whatever projects need to be done at Rock Creek Park. That way, both the intern and the Park benefit most effectively from the experience. I have learned that the intern who is most interested will perform the best." - Lurrie Pope, Rock Creek Park, DC

NSIEE can provide sample intern position descriptions upon request. See the sections of this booklet on WHO DOES WHAT and SUPERVISION for ideas for making adjustments in interns' responsibilities during the internship.

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What About Routine Work?

In most small organizations, all staff members help out with the clerical and administrative tasks. It is appropriate for interns to carry their weight and do their part like other staff, but:

"Provide interesting work, not just drudgery. It is very easy just to assign jobs that no one else wants to do. If that is done on a regular basis, the program will die."

-Joan Fordham
International Crane Foundation
Baraboo, WI

"Bob Mueller, a staff naturalist for National Audubon, Tom Horn (Program Director at the Atlantic Center for the Environment), and others express the concern that interns are often taken on as 'long-term, low-paid staff.' While the organization may be receiving good quality work at little cost, the two-way learning exchange is no longer taking place. When this happens, it is nearly always to the intern's disadvantage."

-Marshall Murphy
Atlantic Center for the Environment[4]

"Give the interns challenging work as well as routine work. If the intern's work is integrated into the main research projects at EAF, the intern feels a sense of importance more strongly than if doing only clerical work."

-Sandy Green, Environmental Action Foundation
Washington, DC

environmental action foundation

Recruiting the Interns

How Do You Find Qualified Students?

Most small environmental organizations report that they get their best interns through informal, word-of-mouth referrals and unsolicited applications. To get good referrals, you must stimulate the natural grapevines available to you. The avenues for attracting the students who can really help your organization are all around you. Your time in tapping these channels for interns is worth every minute invested because good contacts bring good interns. And good internships mean that other strong candidates will want to work for your organization. Environmentalists offer these suggestions:

1. Contact relevant departments at schools in your area -- biology, botany, zoology, environmental sciences, natural resources, forestry, geology, engineering, chemistry, and others.

   Don't forget the departments for journalism, public relations, English, graphics, communications, media, library science, education, business, marketing, accounting, political science, sociology, geography, urban affairs, planning, recreation, and any others related to your organization's functions. Environmentalists sometimes forget there is more than a biology department.

   Look in catalogs, call the schools, visit the departments, and talk to your friends and members who work at the schools. Check with the two-year colleges and secondary schools, too.

"We were surprised that the university faculty were so anxious to help us identify qualified students. It had taken me two months to contact them because I thought they would not take our request seriously. Now we have these same faculty helping us with other projects, and they are looking for good students to work here next semester." -a statewide issues group

2. Talk with your Board of Directors and your members. Ask them to help you make contact with the faculty whom they know. Many are probably professors themselves.

"We get referrals from the faculty members from our own Board and NCNC membership. They can <u>really</u> help identify appropriate students because they know our needs and goals, they are committed to our work, <u>and</u> they know the students. A lot of groups overlook this resource that is right at hand."

-Fred Annand
North Carolina Nature Conservancy

3. Send internship position descriptions to schools in your area and to others you'd like to tap. Some organizations type up a one-page flyer describing their opportunities for students.

4. List your opportunities through the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education. With the support of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, NSIEE will do a periodic listing of environmental internships available in the southeast. The listing will be done in 1984 and 1985. NSIEE also publishes national internship directories in which you can describe your needs.

5. Whenever possible, begin to look for the intern(s) several months ahead of the beginning of the project(s).

Most colleges and universities have programs that can publicize your internship opportunities across campus. It is very important to send your intern position description to these offices. A phone call or personal visit to the staff there can go a long way toward getting you the interns you need year after year. The names of these centralized programs or offices vary—internships, cooperative education, career planning and placement, experiential learning, field studies, applied learning, practicum, or student employment. Some departments or divisions also have internship coordinators. NSIEE can help you identify what offices to contact if you need help.

Remember that it's hard to recruit a qualified student until <u>you</u> define what "qualified" means for the project at hand.

"Be as clear as possible when recruiting. Make prospective interns completely aware of their duties and responsibilities (before they are chosen!). Also, make sure the intern and the school have all the information needed.... No surprises. <u>Start</u> on the right foot."

-Bill Beatty
Brooks Nature Center
Wheeling, WV

See also the section of this booklet on ESTABLISHING ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SCHOOLS (p. 39) for ideas about how to build your grapevine for recruitment of good interns.

How Many Interns?

"It is important for the organization to get a good idea, in advance, how many interns it can handle. Because interns require a great deal of supervision and because it is important for both the organization and the intern to get the most out of the experience, the group should make sure that the present staff has ample time to work with the intern. The organization should not add on more and more interns thinking, 'What great free help!' Rather, be selective and hire fewer interns to be more effective."

- Robert Percival
  Environmental Defense Fund, DC

Start slowly with a maximum of one or two interns in a small organization at the beginning. Have a good experience with interns, sharpen your supervisory skills, and then assess whether your organization can handle more. Several factors--the interns' skills, the nature and duration of the projects, the number of volunteers you have, space, other projects--will determine how many interns you can successfully integrate into your organization at any one time.

Selecting Good Interns

Ask initial applicants to send you a resume, a letter outlining his or her interests, and (if applicable to the position) a writing sample.

These can tell you whether the individual has the basic background you need. Gordon Binder of the Conservation Foundation finds it helpful to get an academic transcript and 3-5 reference names before the interview also. Some environmentalists ask for 2-3 writing samples if writing or analysis are important aspects of the position.

Never hire an intern without an interview. If distance is a problem, phone interviews can suffice. Nancy Haugen of the Newfound Harbor Marine Institute has developed a phone interview format to simplify this process and to ensure she covers everything. A sample is available from NSIEE. Another approach—

"Personal interviews are worth more than a thousand letters and phone calls; allow distant, trusted friends to do the interview if they cannot be afforded."

-Al Fritsch
Appalachia-Science in the Public Interest
Livingston, KY

Use the interview as your "opportunity to provide the student with an overview of the organization, your role and responsibilities, and the role you envision for the student.... Encouraging applicants to specify what they expect to learn helps you to discover any misconceptions a student has about the position."[6] Be sure to clarify the period the intern is available and the financial arrangements.

What else do environmentalists look for?

"Look for interns that are committed to the cause and highly motivated. Find out what motivates the intern to be applying to your organization."

-Dr. Arthur Purcell
Technical Information Project, Inc.
Washington, DC

"We look for students who are flexible enough to work in our small, low-budget organization and who are self-starters."

"Besides research and writing skills (which faculty members and writing samples can screen), I look for good political awareness because of the nature of our work."

In addition to the information received via written materials and your own interviews with students, here are other ways to get good evaluations about your top candidates:

1. "Talk to the professors. They know their students."
   -Pat Dusenbury
   Southern Growth Policies Board
   Research Triangle Park, NC

2. Call former work supervisors. Tell them briefly what knowledge and "work skills" your internship requires and ask about the student. If you have any doubts about the applicant, you might ask a leading question or two to see how the former supervisor assesses that concern.

Finally, if you do not find an applicant that fits the needs of the project as you defined it, either modify the position or do not hire an intern. It may not be worth the effort if your instincts tell you it is not a good match.

When you have made your decision, keep the door open with all applicants until your chosen person accepts. Clarify again the responsibilities, the time frame, who the supervisor is, and the financial arrangements.

The Arrangements

Who Does What, When, and Why?

Roles and Responsibilities: Yours, the Intern's, and the School's

The student, the supervisor, and the educational institution all enter into the internship arrangement because it helps them to meet their goals. The beauty of a good internship is that it is a "win-win-win" situation because all three parties benefit. The particular goals of each party are different, however, and it is essential for each party to clarify his/her own expectations and goals for the internship, and communicate those goals and assumptions to the other two parties.

The agreements that are reached about the respective roles and responsibilities of each party should be written down. The internship will be only as good as the clarity of these understandings between the three parties.

"The basis of a successful internship is a clear understanding of what is expected by each party in work assigned, stipend or salary (if any), duration, periodic planning and evaluation, and amount of supervision."

-Ann C. Kenworthy
Partners for Livable Places
Washington, DC

"The organization should be very clear about the kind of work it wants the intern to do. Then the organization must be sure the demands are realistic, specifically regarding the time allotted and the skills of the intern. The group's needs should be met, but only under these realistic constraints. Also of extreme importance is the ample communication of these demands to the potential intern so the intern knows what is expected of him/her and knows if he/she can handle the responsibility. On the other hand, it is important that the organization does not underestimate the worth and capabilities of the intern, so that the group can benefit as much as possible."

-Dennis Reeder
Partners for Livable Places
Washington, DC

"Make sure the interns understand what is expected, who they are responsible to, and that they have the support of your staff and of their own college's staff."

-Helen Domske
Aquarium of Niagara Falls

"Exploitation of students...may occur only because of lack of familiarity with the goals of the college or university intern program and of the capabilities of students. (The) solution is adequate communication between not only the host and the student, but also with the university... When working with the interns, supervisors can also develop their own learning objectives which they want to fit into the internship experience."

-Harold Wood
Friends of the Earth[7]

If students are receiving academic credit or are participating in a school-sponsored program, talk with the faculty member or program staff to be sure you understand the school's goals and re-

quirements. The student will need to establish learning objectives for the experience, and you will want to be aware of your role in helping to support and evaluate his or her progress.

Review your initial agreements periodically, and revise the respective roles and responsibilities if needed. The project may take longer than you expect or you may discover additional talents the intern can offer on other projects. The important factor is to be clear with the intern and the school about any adjustments agreed upon during the course of the internship.

NSIEE can offer samples of learning agreements.

About Compensation

Compensation for student interns varies greatly -- no pay, regular wages, contracts for services (pay for completion of a project rather than by the hour), reimbursement for meals or commuting expenses, nonmonetary compensation, housing, subsidized pay through student aid programs, and many other variations. Some organizations have an established policy about payment that applies to all interns--i.e., all undergraduate students are paid at one rate while all graduate students are paid at a slightly higher rate. Or perhaps all internships are unpaid. In some organizations, the particular arrangements are negotiated with prospective interns. They can depend on the nature of the project, the financial status of the organization and the individual, and the particular interests and needs of the student.

Do not let the lack of funds stop you from hosting interns. There are many valid exchanges of "valuables" that do not involve monetary compen-

Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation (LEAF)

sation. You are offering the student a good opportunity to develop expertise and gain experience. You can also offer access to other environmental organizations, participation in conferences and meetings, references, professional contacts, your time and your staff's time in teaching and training. You may also be able to arrange to provide transportation expenses, meals, housing, access to group insurance rates, access to data needed for a term paper or masters' thesis, or a host of other types of compensation.

Some environmentalists report that they are better able to arrange unpaid internships during the academic year than in the summer.

Do build funds for interns into your budget for next year, and include intern stipends in your grant proposals. Most foundations know that interns help grantees to get extra mileage from grant funds.

While some groups have sought special grants from foundations and corporations specifically to support their interns, this is not likely to be a

source of funding year after year. Remember that you are not only looking for short-term solutions; you are looking for realistic ways to build internships into your ongoing staffing pattern. If a well-designed, unpaid internship program is your best bet, think carefully about what you can offer interns in return for their work.

FEDERAL COLLEGE WORK-STUDY PROGRAM[5]

The College Work-Study Program is a federally funded scholarship program for undergraduate and graduate students. You can work with the head of the College Work-Study Program at area colleges to get the work-study students. This program can reduce the cost of your internships for students that qualify for financial aid. Students with financial need are awarded grants which they earn by working part-time during the academic year and full-time during the summer. Students apply for these grants through the financial aid offices at their schools. Financial aid officers determine the eligibility and the size of the grant for each student.

APPROPRIATE POSITIONS:
Work-study students may work in government offices (except the U.S. Office of Education) or in private, nonprofit organizations. They may not work for a profit-making organization or engage in politically partisan or sectarian activities. In general, challenging jobs that relate to career interests and/or academic studies are suitable.

COST TO YOUR ORGANIZATION:
Organizations that employ work-study students pay from 20% to 37% of the students' wages. The student's educational institution determines the rate charged to your organization. The colleges or universities provide the greater percentage of each student's salary with federal funds. If you are interested in recruiting a work-study student contact the financial aid offices at colleges or universities in your area.

About Academic Credit

There are many different programs and arrangements through which schools grant academic credit for what students learn through internships. Some are formal programs (departmental or campus-wide), and some are informal ("independent study" courses or field experiences built into a course). The faculty member who grants credit will want to work closely with the student to be sure there are clear objectives for what the student will learn and clear criteria for evaluation. Often students attend seminars, keep journals, and write reports and papers. Be sure that you know what is required and that you talk with the faculty advisor. Even if a student is not receiving credit it is very important to know what his or her learning goals are throughout the internship. You have a lot to do with whether those goals are met.

NSIEE has several services available to faculty members and program directors who want to build internships into their academic programs. See the inside front and back covers of this booklet.

Making It Work

Gordon Brooks

Orientation

"Intern guidance is most critical in the early stages of a project. At this time, the interns gain an understanding of administrative procedures and begin to learn what role they play within the organization."

-Marshall Murphy
Atlantic Center for the Environment[7]

Most environmental groups are small enough that no formal orientation and training program is needed. Do familiarize the interns with the goals,

activities, and current priorities of the organization. A few other tips from conservationists:

"Be sure he or she reads your basic literature and attends meetings to get the fullest perspective possible. The more the intern knows, the more valuable the internship is to us."

"Our volunteer stewardship committees help with intern orientation."

-Fred Annand
North Carolina Nature Conservancy

"Provide several phases of orientation so that not too much is taught at one time. Be available for questions."

-Joan Fordham
International Crane Foundation
Baraboo, WI

"We use an 'Intern Survival Manual' [for in-house orientation]."

-Richard James
Schuylkill Valley Nature Center
Philadelphia, PA

"Introduce the intern to all staff members the first day. Encourage staff to talk with the intern throughout the internship. Perhaps have a series of brown bag lunches to acquaint interns with the work of the organization. Make sure the president or director has a chance to meet with interns."

-Gordon Binder
The Conservation Foundation
Washington, DC

"Allow time for orientation but remember that an intern doesn't have to know everything about an organization before beginning a project."

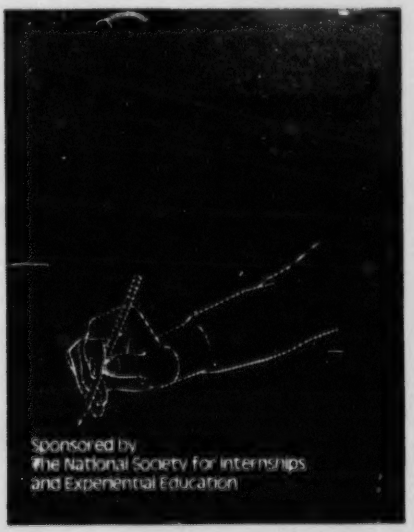
-Pat Dusenbury
Southern Growth Policies Board
Research Triangle Park, NC

"Orientation and training are the single most important factors from the standpoint of your agency and the intern."

-David Zahller
National Park Service
Washington, DC

"Remember to explain the basic office procedures. It's hard to be useful to the organization if you don't know how to use the phone systems."

NSIEE has prepared a guide to help students take the initiative to get the orientation and training they need in order to do a good job. The Experienced Hand: A Student Manual for Making the Most of an Internship by Timothy Stanton and Kamil Ali is available from the Carroll Press, P.O. Box 8113, Cranston, RI 02920, for $6.95. You might provide a copy for your intern to help ensure that he or she does his part.



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Supervision

Two themes run through all the groups' comments about intern supervision: (1) take time for supervision on a regular schedule, and (2) the more clearly you communicate your needs and expectations throughout the internship, the more you are going to get the work you need from the intern.

"Ask for regular verbal and written updates on how the work is progressing."
-Ken Bossong
Citizens' Energy Project
Washington, DC

"Supervising interns is like supervising regular staff except that the short-term nature of the internship means that you can't let problems ride for long — or the internship will be over. Keep it on track."
-a local conservation group

"The organization must take responsibility for defining the parameters of the intern's work. The group has to be willing and able to spend the necessary time up front and throughout the program to gain maximum intern effectiveness."
-Whittell Field Ecology Center
Chevy Chase, MD

"Set a rigid schedule with definite interim completion dates, always leaving time for review by the supervisor. This helps ensure timely completion of the project."
-Dr. Arthur Purcell
Technical Information Project, Inc.
Washington, DC

"Interns need their work critiqued if they are to learn from the experience. We've found that when [the supervision] is inadequate, the work product is not especially helpful and the experience disappointing."

-Gordon Binder
The Conservation Foundation

"One staff member should be directly responsible for each intern. This makes it easier for the intern while ensuring a clear allocation of staff responsibility. We've learned that the benefit from having an intern is directly related to the staff investment in helping the intern do a good job."

-Pat Dusenbury
Southern Growth Policies Board

"We use interns' written journals to keep up on his progress and to deal quickly with any problems that may arise."

-Helen Domske
Aquarium of Niagara Falls

"Please remember that the working relationship between you and the intern can be as meaningful to (both of you) as the project itself."

-Massachusetts Internship Office

After the initial period of intense supervision, you can decide how much supervision is necessary and appropriate by the intern's performance and the nature of the project. Experience is the best teacher when it comes to supervision.

A note about "supervising from a distance"--

"For interns working in isolated areas (away from our office), we are experimenting with cooperative arrangements with local university and government people for on-site supervision."

-Fred Annand
North Carolina Nature Conservancy
Chapel Hill, NC

Duration of the Internship

Most environmentalists report that at least 2-3 months are needed to make the internship worthwhile. For a special, intensive project such as research on a bill under legislative consideration, a shorter internship can be very useful if the intern already has the skills and knowledge needed. Some other comments-

"We don't take interns for less than a 10-week period, so that all the intern has learned in the initial weeks can begin to pay off."

-Sandy Green
Environmental Action Foundation
Washington, DC

"We get the best results when the internship is long enough for the intern to really become involved in the organization. Most of the NWF's interns work for six months, giving them an excellent taste of what a career in the field might be like. This six-month period need not apply to more local, issue-oriented groups. Then a three-month program might suffice--or a part-time, semester-long period."

-Shirley Strong
National Wildlife Federation
Washington, DC

Evaluation

"Do not wait until the last day to inform the intern of shortcomings or to give praise where deserved. It is advisable to take time at regular, stated intervals to meet with the intern to see how things are going."

-Harold Woods
Friends of the Earth[8]

"[In addition to] informal evaluations throughout the internship, we provide a written evaluation at the completion of the work. Success is based on the expectations that were laid out in writing at the beginning of the internship. For those internships involving tasks like trail maintenance, performance is judged on behavior such as attendance, cooperativeness, and demonstrated competency in the task."

-Susan Spitzer
The Nature Conservancy
Arlington, VA

"Apply professional standards even though they may be high for a student. It becomes a learning experience."

-Gordon Binder
The Conservation Foundation

"Weekly meetings and a final evaluation."

-Bill Beatty
Brooks Nature Center

"Both positive and negative feedback will enable interns to measure their performance against the standards you set. The most obvious factor to evaluate is the quality of work the intern produces for your organization. Equally important are less tangible factors such as the degree to which the intern assumes and handles responsibility, evidence of increased maturity, and demonstrated confidence in dealing with clients." [9]

If the internship does not seem to be working out after several full efforts on your part and the student's, either party has the right to terminate it sooner than the scheduled completion date. Be sure you communicate problems to the faculty advisor.

You may be asked later to provide references about the intern's work. Keep a permanent file on each intern documenting performance, weeks worked, and responsibilities. You can be an important supporter of the intern's later career contributions to the field.

Some Considerations

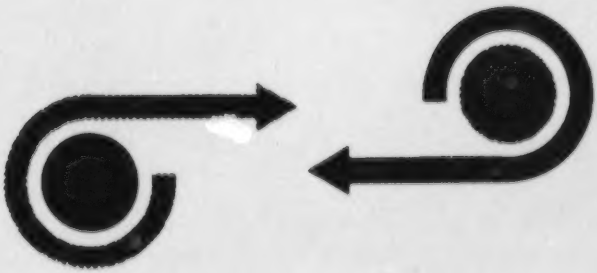
If you are ready at this point to recruit an intern, please wait! To ensure that the first student you sponsor is not the last, please consider some important points.

YOUR TIME AND ENERGY. At first, students may require as much of your time as do other employees. You will need to set aside some time to interview prospective interns, to provide training and orientation, and to meet with the intern to discuss how the internship is progressing.

STAFF INVOLVEMENT. You should determine whether or not the student's assignment will require the assistance of individuals other than yourself. If so, make the people aware of your student intern and the role you anticipate the intern will fill. One person should assume responsibility for the intern even if the intern works on a variety of projects involving several people. Generally, your staff must be prepared to interact professionally with students who are usually younger and less experienced.

If your organization does not have staff or has only a part-time staff person, it is crucial that you plan very carefully who will work with the intern, talk regularly with him or her, and review his or her work.

Helping Your Program Continue



Piedmont Waste Exchange

Establishing Ongoing Relationships with the Schools

"It is important to utilize the college and university contacts you already have. Most environmental groups already have many faculty members involved in their organizations. They just need to draw these people into helping them to (1) select the projects that interns can handle, and (2) identify the best students for the projects. They can also help in monitoring and evaluating the interns' work."

-Fred Annand
North Carolina Nature Conservancy

Why Is This Important?

1. The schools are anxious to maintain relationships with organizations that are doing meaningful work which can offer their students good opportunities to learn.

2. It is one of the best ways to ensure that an intern program will have continuity and a high likelihood of sustained success.

3. For help in deciding which of your projects are most suitable for student interns.

4. For easier recruitment and selection of interns. Faculty that understand your organization and your needs can be invaluable in identifying strong intern prospects.

5. For arranging academic credit for interns. Working toward intentional learning goals (as required for academic credit) can increase an intern's motivation and commitment. Credit may also mean that the student can be more flexible about financial arrangements.

"Maintain contact with the schools's staff in areas of shared concern whether an internship is currently in place or not. I stress the importance of working with the schools and professors in selecting interns and projects suitable for internships."

-Pat Dusenbury
Southern Growth Policies Board

With Which Schools Should You Establish these Relationships?

The number of schools you work with actively will depend on the number of interns you want to have each year and on the particular schools in your area. More important than the number of schools is the number and quality of your contacts, even within the same school. Get a list of all the colleges and universities in your state. Choose 2-10 institutions that have departments from which you could draw interns during the next two years. In addition to the obvious fields related to the environment, consider institutions with curricula in journalism, public relations, education, law, planning, graphics, media, or other fields that relate to functions of your organization. If you are not sure what a school offers, get a catalog. You may be surprised at the range of talent available in your back yard.

Also consider institutions where you already have natural ties you could cultivate--the schools where your Board members teach, the alma maters of your staff, and the schools within an hour's driving distance.

Larger organizations or groups with very specialized needs may want to invest in ongoing relationships with out-of-state institutions as well. Don't overlook the talents of high school students

in your area. Many high schools have sophisticated community learning programs to offer students' help to nonprofit organizations.

Who Are the Key Individuals to Contact?

There are four types of individuals at the educational institutions who can help you establish mutually beneficial relationships for internships:

1. Faculty in fields related to the environment.

2. Faculty in fields related to your organization's functions and internal processes--law, political science, public relations, journalism, education, marketing, media, graphics, advertising management, accounting, communications, English (for proposal writing), social sciences, statistics, computer science, and others. For functions such as outreach and publicity that are constant needs of your group, you may find that an ongoing relationship with a school of journalism, communications, or business would be worthwhile.

3. Directors of intern programs. These can be programs in one department or campus-wide. These directors are in a position to publicize your needs to students and to refer students to you regularly. These programs vary in structure and can go by several names --internships, cooperative education, field studies, experiential learning, off-campus learning, and others. If you need help in finding the appropriate people on a particular campus, call the Career Planning and Placement office and ask.

4. Deans and other administrators. These officials can help put you in touch with the faculty and staff who can offer you direct assistance.

How Do You Initiate these Relationships?

You can write, call, talk with them in person, and look for opportunities to discuss your internship needs in professional and social settings. Let them know about your organization and your goals. Tell them about current and upcoming projects. The more they understand about your ongoing needs, the more helpful they can be. This is why your own members can be excellent sources of intern referrals and referrals to their colleagues who work at the same school. Inventory your staff, volunteers, and board of directors to see what departments and programs are already familiar to them. You might consider a survey or a mailing to area schools (NSIEE has samples). Put a request in your newsletter to let your members know of your interest in hosting interns. Several environmental organizations that really use interns effectively are now able to rely solely on referrals from trusted faculty and intern program directors.

Massachusetts Internship Office

How Do You Maintain Healthy Relationships for Continued Referrals and Support?

After you establish relationships with selected schools and individuals, they can help you select projects and interns year after year if you nurture the relationships to keep them alive and well. Environmentalists say--

"Correspond regularly and thank the schools for providing interns when they do."
-Ken Bossong
Citizens' Energy Project

"Keep them informed about projects and changes in your program. Provide feedback about interns from that school."
-Joan Fordham
International Crane Foundation

"A good experience on the part of the intern is the best way of establishing relationships that are sustained. Prompt responses and attention to their deadlines are important, too."
-Gordon Binder
The Conservation Foundation

"Look for opportunities other than internships to work together on shared concerns. The faculty members also help with our research and legislation. The internships helped us establish our ties with the schools. Now we get multiple benefits from their participation."

"Volunteer to be a guest lecturer. Keep the schools on your mailing list. Invite the faculty to agency functions (official and just social)."

-David Zahller
National Park Service

"Define the type of internship clearly, state your needs clearly, leave no questions unanswered before the internship begins."

-Ann Kenworthy
Partners for Livable Places

"[The best way to establish good relationships with the schools that feed interns to us] is to provide a good internship program. Any school will get a positive report about our program from past interns."

-Helen Domske
Aquarium of Niagara Falls

"We try to continue contact with the schools over a period of years. We give talks at them on occasion."

-Al Fritsch
Appalachia-Science in the
Public Interest

Remember that the schools need what you have to offer--important goals and meaningful projects that provide excellent opportunities for their students to learn from firsthand experience. So take the time to talk with them and follow up. It's one of the best investments you can make.

What Next?

After each internship, reflect on the endeavor. Did it help your organization? What was good about the approach you took in defining the intern's responsibilities, supervising, and evaluating? What would you like to change about your approach on these and other aspects of the internship? What did you learn from the experience? What did you like and dislike about the structure of the internship?

Look at your internship program as an evolving resource that you can adjust to fit the changing needs of your organization. With what new initiatives and projects could interns help you in the coming year?

Use this tremendous human resource as an ongoing way to help your organization meet its goals. And contribute to the growth of upcoming professionals who will continue to work for a better environment long after the internship.

How NSIEE Can Help

NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR INTERNSHIPS AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

2nd Floor, 122 St. Mary's Street
Raleigh, N.C. 27605

(919) 834-7536

How NSIEE Can Help

The National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE) offers several services to support your efforts to establish successful internships in your organization as an ongoing part of your staffing pattern. These services are available free of charge (through 1985) to environmental organizations in the southeastern states through the support of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. They are available to others at cost.

NSIEE is not a placement organization or a clearinghouse for the referral of students to your organization. Rather, we can help you and your staff plan which projects interns can handle successfully, how to recruit and select qualified students, how to supervise effectively, how to evaluate interns' performance, and how to build sustained relationships with schools that provide interns for you. NSIEE can provide you with:

1. Lists of college and university faculty and administrators who can refer qualified students to your group,

2. Samples of internship position descriptions (so you can see the types of responsibilities interns can handle),

3. Help in assessing your current needs and how interns can best assist you now,

4. Names of environmentalists with experience in using interns who have offered to share what they have learned, and

5. Assistance in planning your intern recruitment, training, supervision, and evaluation.

See the inside front and back covers of this booklet for additional information about NSIEE's goals and services. To use these services, contact:

Jane Kendall
Executive Director
National Society for Internships and
Experiential Education
122 St. Mary's Street
Raleigh, NC 27605
(919) 834-7536

NOTES

[1]Harold W. Wood, Jr., "Environmental Internships: A report prepared for the Northwest Office of Friends of the Earth," August, 1976, p. 2.

[2]Marshall Murphy, "The Role of Interns in Conservation," Nexus (Spring 1984), vol. 6, no. 2, Atlantic Center for the Environment, p. 5.

[3]Ibid., p. 5.

[4]Ibid., p. 5.

[5]Massachusetts Internship Office, "A Guide for Intern Sponsors," Boston, Massachusetts, 1983.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Wood, p. 10.

[8]Ibid., p. 14.

[9]Massachusetts Internship Office.

NSIEE SERVICES

NSIEE services for faculty, administrators, environmentalists, and other interested persons in any field include--

- Experiential Education newsletter - current information on internships, new publications, research, upcoming events. Sent only to current NSIEE members.
- National and local conferences - for professional development, sharing of ideas and successful program practices. The 1984 National Conference will be held in San Diego CA on October 18-20 and the 1985 National Conference will be in Pittsburgh PA.
- Publications:
  - several publications about sound practices in programs for internships and experiential education. Call for a list.
  - directories of internship opportunities:

    Directory of Public Service Internships, $12 + $1.50 handling
    Directory of Washington Internships, $9.50 + $1.50
    National Directory of Internships, available in fall 1984. Write for price information.
  - student guides:

    The Experienced Hand: A Student Manual for Making the Most of an Internship. $6.95 from the Carroll Press, PO Box 8113, Cranston, RI 02920.
    Expand Your Options: Six Do-It-Yourself Modules for deciding about learning goals and field experiences.
- PANEL (Peer Assistance Network in Experiential Learning) - a computerized talent bank of professionals experienced in various aspects of internships. These "Peer Assistants" have volunteered to help other professionals who want to develop or improve an intern program.
- Special interest groups, professional liability insurance, others.

The best way to use all NSIEE services and to receive current information is to become a Member of NSIEE. Annual dues are $45 for Individual Members and $150 for Institutional/Organizational Members.

For publications or membership, make checks payable to NSIEE and mail to the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, 122 St. Mary's Street, Raleigh, NC 27605. NSIEE is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. Contributions to NSIEE are tax-deductible.

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